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ABSTRACT

This brief position paper describes the integration of children's literature into the social studies/humanities methods course for elementary school teachers at California State University (Rialto). The course is built around a thematic unit approach and reading and writing across the curriculum in order to give future teachers a model in preparation for teaching to meet state curriculum guidelines. Titles of books appropriate for each grade level, to address California history, and to make the bilingual connection are listed. Various teaching strategies also are described, such as "Book Talks" for thematic units, silent reading programs, and story telling. (EH)

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FEATURE THE "STORY" IN HISTORY: THE USE OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AS TEXT IN AN ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES / HUMANITIES METHODS COURSE

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Reason for the different approach:

Two factors influenced the change from the use of a standard text to use of selections of children's literature. First, and of greatest concern, is the emphasis in our elementary teacher preparation program. Both on our campus and recommendations from the State of California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, there is an emphasis on a literature based approach. State documents like "It's Elementary" place emphasis on reading and writing across the curriculum and a thematic unit approach to the total curriculum. That being the case it seemed appropriate to model the use of literature to teach the social studies/ humanities methods course. Second, since the social studies/humanities methods course is linked to the first term of student teaching I have found that students rarely read a text but do read children's books, particularly those that they can use in their classroom, such as Byrd Balor's Guess Who My Best Friend Is which they can use both to meet their students and to learn about student interest and language facility.

Evolution:

The change from text to children's literature was gradual. In the earliest stages I brought in samples and demonstrated lessons. Then I began to have the students purchase two then three children's books along with the required text. Now I have standard texts on reserve in the library and require the purchase and use of six to eight children's books.

Choice of Children's Literature Selections:

Except for the course for the intern program, I have no clue as to the make up of my class. That is, I do not know ahead of time what grade levels my students will be teaching for their student teaching assignment. By example, this term my 31 students are placed: K = 6, 1st = 7, 2nd = 6, 3rd = 2, 4th = 3, 5th = 2, 6th = 3, and combinations 1-2, 2-3, 3-4 one each. Knowing such a span is probable I need to select pieces of literature that represent the social studies units that will span those grades and also relate to units taught during that part of the school year. I also try to select sample works of literature that include such themes as multicultural perspective, geographical settings, biographical history, and integration of the humanities. The State Social Science Framework offers some suggestions, but tends to be out of date (one suggestion is out of print). But, the themes of the state framework are being carried out in most classrooms. The Themes at primary grade levels include: "Learning and Working Now

and Long Ago", "A Child's Place in Time and Space", "People Who Make a Difference", and "Meeting People, Ordinary and Extraordinary through Biography, Story Folktale and Legend". The intermediate grade themes focus on California State history and geography, early American history and geography and introduction to the ancient world.

I have set a few priorities for selection of children's books to be used. First, in order to keep costs reasonable the book must be available in paper back edition. Second, books that meet multiple criteria (useful in several possible units, focus on several areas of the social science) are preferred. Third, there must be a balance of selections so both primary and intermediate grade needs are met.

Useful Texts:

Because of a format that includes history, geography, and cultures and also a model that encourages student independent exploration of related topics; the books of Holling C. Holling have been very helpful. Two specific titles have been used often: The Tree in the Trail and Minn of the Mississippi. Together they give students two interesting models for development of a social studies unit; one where one explores history from a given geographic spot, the other where one explores both history and geography as one travels with a guide-character. Margin illustrations and notes facilitate the reading and writing across the curriculum and humanities integration aspects desired for the course. While Holling's other books Sea Bird and Paddle to the Sea also feature similar aspects, their scope is more limited and are less useful to topics in California's "History Social Science Framework".

An easy to read book, The Drinking Gourd by F.N. Monjo fits the "People Who Make a Difference" primary grade theme, and "pre-Civil War" intermediate grade theme. It is also a selection that facilitates demonstration of creative drama and socio-drama to teach social studies concepts. This selection also opens the possibility of introducing a sample text set based on the Underground Railroad. (Brady by J. Fritz, The Tin Heart by K. Ackerman, ...If You Traveled on the Underground Railroad by E. Levine, The Big Dipper and You by E.C. Krupp, Follow the Drinking Gourd by J.Winter and biographies of Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth)

A collection of folk tales of Africa, When Hippo Was Hairy by N. Greaves, provides not only an opportunity to demonstrate instruction of cultural values but also establishes a solid link with geographic regions and animal habitat. This can also provide an opportunity to expand into the Anansi Tales and other folk literature of Africa.

The State of California is the central focus for grade four. Several selections have been used each for a variety of reasons. Leo Politi's Song of the Swallows focuses on the mission period, has a link to music and art, and is a Caldicott Award winner. Blue Willow by Doris Gates details the depression in the Central Valley (Fresno), migrant farm workers, poverty, and a positive image of Hispanics. Vallejo and the Four Flags by E.J. Comstock presents California's early history from a hispanic and biographical point

of view. Patty Reed's Doll by R.K. Laurgaard (Donner Party), Lupita Manana by P Beatty (Illegal Immigrants and local history of Colton and Indio) and Carlota by S. O'Dell (Rancho Period and local history of Riverside) provide specialized information and make a choice difficult. Laurence Yep has written several books that provide excellent background on the Chinese immigrants to the San Francisco and Sacramento areas. While Dragonwings and Rainbow People give historical perspective, Child of the Owl provides a more current community perspective. Similarly, Yoshiko Uchida gives her readers an understanding of the Japanese American experience in Berkeley (Jar of Dreams) and the detention camps during World War II (Journey to Topaz and Journey Home).

Family and Community themes often overlap with multicultural themes. Useful books have been Annie and the Old One by M. Miles which deals with family, Navajo culture, generations and death; The Legend of the Bluebonnet and The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush by T. DePaola deal with culture and values of the Native Americans of the Central Planes, Angel Child, Dragon Child by M. Surat deals with Vietnamese integration in an American school, and The Hundred Penny Box by S.B. Mathis deals with the extended Afro-American family and a sense of family history. Katy and the Big Snow by Virginia Lee Burton provides a basic understanding of community for young children and an opportunity to teach early map skills. The multicultural neighborhood can be explored from Everybody Cooks Rice by N. Dooley which not only shows relationships among people and cultures but also provides recipes (for those culminating activities).

The Bilingual Connection:

Even though Credential Candidates in the Bilingual Program are in a different course that includes bilingual methodology in content areas, student teachers in the "English Only" have many primarily Spanish speaking children in their classes. For this reason, each term, I try to select at least one book that is written in both Spanish and English. Because of the themes of family and community I often use Harriet Rohmer's Uncle Nacho's Hat; El Sombrero Del Tio Nacho. On occasion Rohmer's The Invisible Hunters; Los Cazadores Invisibles is used instead; it links well with community themes and units on Pre-Columbian Civilization.
Of particular help to individuals in lower primary grades is a book by the story teller Joe Hayes: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Oh; Lunes, Martes, Miercoles, !O!.In addition to the days of the week in English and Spanish, cultural values are presented.

Book Talks and Read the Room:

In addition to the required text students are introduced to other children's literature that relate to social studies topics. Modeling of "Book Talks" where the instructor introduces students to a variety of books on a topic as though addressing a group of 4th or 5th grade students has been a successful way to introduce possibilities for thematic units. Providing books all over the room for students to pick up and read silently and then discuss, models silent reading programs in the schools but focuses the

content on social studies. (DEAR = Drop Everything And Read) Having students focus on story telling in a puzzle group rotation also provides an opportunity to demonstrate a grouping technique along with a language arts process related to social studies. For the latter I use a series of books by Terri Cohlene: Clamshell Boy a Makah Legend, Ka-Ha-Si and the Loon, an Eskimo Legend, Dancing Drum, A Cherokee Legend, Quilworker, a Cheyenne Legend, Turquoise Boy, a Navajo Legend, and Little Firefly, an Algonquian Legend.

Topics that have been most useful in modeling book talks and whole class reading are Native American Folk Literature, World Folk Literature, Biography, and Bibliotherapy or teacher as counselor in response to social issues. The topics have worked well because there are a number of titles available for elementary grades, there is a strong interest in these topics and the topics fit nicely into the range of units within the History Social Science Framework for the state.

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